

Message Text

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TAGS: ENRG EI

SUBJ: CLOSURE OF BANTRY TERMINAL THREATENED

REF: DUBLIN 1488

1. THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TUG BOAT WORKERS AND GULF OIL COMPANY AT THE BANTRY BAY OIL TRANSSHIPMENT TERMINAL CONTINUES. THERE IS INCREASED SPECULATION IN THE LOCAL PRESS THAT GULF OIL COMPANY MAY CHOOSE TO CLOSE THE TERMINAL PERMANENTLY AND PULL OUT OF IRELAND.

2. IN A DISCUSSION WITH A GULF OIL COMPANY OFFICIAL WE WERE ADVISED THAT GULF HAS NOT YET TAKEN A DECISION ON WHETHER IT WILL INDEED CLOSE THE BANTRY TERMINAL. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE TELEX TRAFFIC BETWEEN BANTRY AND HEADQUARTERS IN PITTSBURG OVER WHETHER OR WHEN TO ISSUE "PROTECTIVE NOTICES" TO GULF EMPLOYEES. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THE BANTRY TERMINAL IS CLEARLY NOT AN ECONOMIC PROPOSITION. WITH ALTERNATIVE FACILITIES AVAILABLE AND ALREADY IN USE, THERE WOULD BE ABUNDANT SUPPORT FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT BANTRY BAY TERMINAL SHOULD BE CLOSED DOWN ALTOGETHER. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GULF IS STRONGLY INCLINED TOWARD CLOSURE AND THAT FINAL DECISION MAY BE TAKEN WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO.

3. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES THE MAIN ISSUE WITH THE TUG BOAT

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WORKERS IS WHETHER THEY ARE TO RECEIVE FULL PAY FROM AUGUST 4

UNTIL THE TIME THAT OPERATIONS ARE IN FACT RESUMED. THIS IS A FIRM CONDITION THAT HAS BEEN LAID DOWN BY THE WORKERS. OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO THE WORK STOPPAGE HAVE BEEN FAIRLY WELL SETTLED. RESIDENTS OF THE BANTRY AREA ARE UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNED OVER THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THEIR COMMUNITY IF GULF CEASES OPERATIONS. WE UNDERSTAND SOME PRESSURE IS BEING BUILT UP TO INDUCE THE TUG BOAT WORKERS TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE SINCE THEIR DEMANDS ARE SMALL IN COMPARISON TO THE IMMENSE LOSS THE COMMUNITY MIGHT SUFFER OTHERWISE.

4. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR BEEN SILENT ON THIS QUESTION. THE BANTRY TERMINAL DOES NOT SERVE IRISH REFINERIES AND IS SOLELY A TRANSSHIPMENT POINT. THE GOI'S PRIMARY INTERESTS ARE TWO. ONE IS THAT THE STORAGE FACILITIES CONTRIBUTE TO THE IRISH EC COMMITMENT TO MAINTAIN EMERGENCY STOCKS. THE OTHER INTEREST IS THE ADDITIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT THAT CLOSURE WOULD CREATE FOR AN ECONOMY THAT IS STILL SUFFERING FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE RECESSION. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE SHOULD GULF PULL OUT. MOST LIKELY, GOI'S REACTION WOULD BE LIMITED TO EXPRESSIONS OF REGRET. CURLEY

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